The Harmony of Gosińga

How the path from communal living to the highest attainment was revealed in a single conversation.

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A Meeting in the Forest

The Buddha, emerging from his retreat, approached the sal forest park at Gosiṅga.

He was met by the park keeper, who warned him: “Don’t come into this park, ascetic. There are three gentlemen staying here whose nature is to desire self-knowledge. Do not disturb them.”

Hearing this, Venerable Anuruddha came out to greet his teacher, followed by Venerable Nandiya and Venerable Kimbila.

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The First Inquiry: A Foundation of Harmony

“I hope you’re living in harmony, appreciating each other, without quarreling, blending like milk and water, and regarding each other with kindly eyes?”

“Indeed, sir, we live in harmony like this.”

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The Method of Harmony: Different in Body, One in Mind

The Buddha's Question:

But how do you live this way?

Anuruddha's Explanation:

- I think, 'I'm fortunate, so very fortunate, to live together with spiritual companions such as these.'
- I consistently treat these venerables with kindness by way of body, speech, and mind...
- I think, 'Why don't I set aside my own ideas and just go along with these venerables' ideas?' And that's what I do.

"Though we're different in body, sir, we're one in mind, it seems to me."

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The Second Inquiry: Diligence in Action, Not Words

The Buddha's Question: But I hope you're living diligently, keen, and resolute?

The Monks' Method

- Whoever returns first from almsround prepares the seats, water, and rubbish bin.
- Whoever returns last eats any leftovers or disposes of them.
- If a water pot is empty, we set it up. If one cannot, he summons another with a wave of the hand... **But we don't break into speech for that reason.**
- And every five days we sit together for the whole night and discuss the teachings.

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The Ascent Begins: From Diligence to Distinction

“But as you live diligently like this, have you achieved any superhuman distinction in knowledge and vision worthy of the noble ones, a comfortable meditation?”

How could we not, sir?

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The Four Absorptions: A Progressive Stillness

Good, good! But have you achieved any other superhuman distinction for going beyond and stilling that meditation?

...the fourth absorption, without pleasure or pain, with **pure equanimity and mindfulness**.
...the third absorption, where we meditate with equanimity, mindful and aware, **personally experiencing the bliss.**
...the second absorption, which has the **rapture and bliss born of immersion, with internal clarity and mind at one.**
Secluded from sensual pleasures... we enter and remain in the first absorption, which has the **rapture and bliss born of seclusion**.

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Beyond Form: The Dimensions of the Infinite

Going totally beyond perceptions of form... aware that 'space is infinite', we enter and remain in the **dimension of infinite space**.

Going totally beyond the dimension of infinite space... aware that **'consciousness is infinite'**, we enter and remain in the **dimension of infinite consciousness.**

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Into Emptiness: The Most Subtle States of Mind

Going totally beyond the dimension of infinite consciousness... aware that ‘there is nothing at all', we enter and remain in the dimension of nothingness.

Going totally beyond the dimension of nothingness, we enter and remain in the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception.

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The Summit: The Cessation of Perception and Feeling

Going totally beyond the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, we enter and remain in the **cessation of perception and feeling.**

And, having seen with wisdom, **our defilements have come to an end.**

“Good, good! There is no better or finer way of **meditating comfortably than this.”**

— The Buddha

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A Private Revelation Among Peers

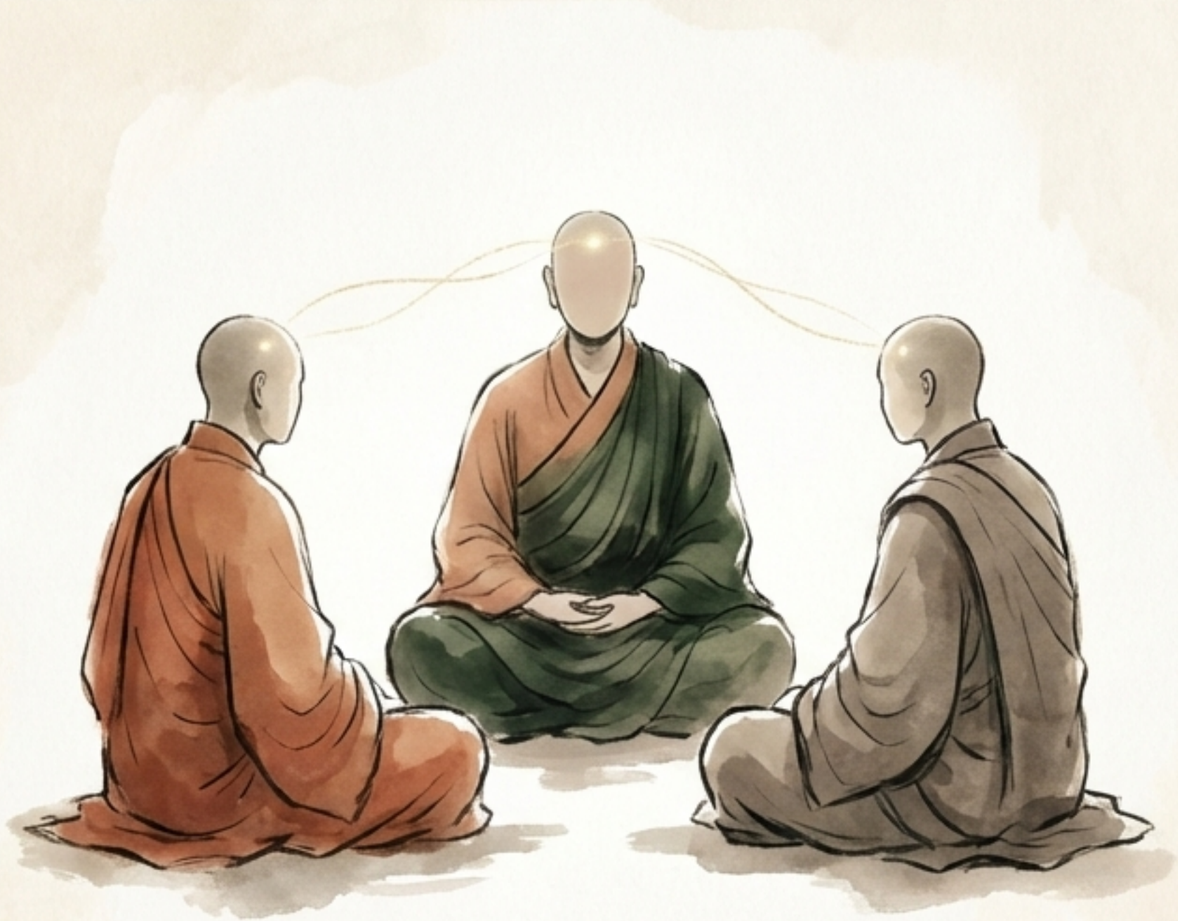
After the Buddha departed, Nandiya and Kimbila asked Anuruddha:

- “Did we ever tell you that we had gained such and such meditations and attainments… as you revealed to the Buddha?”

Anuruddha’s Reply:

- “The venerables did not tell me… But I discovered it by **encompassing your minds**, and **deities also told me**.

  I answered when the Buddha directly asked about it.”



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A Cry Heard Through the Heavens

**The Vajjis are lucky! The Vajjian people are so very lucky...""

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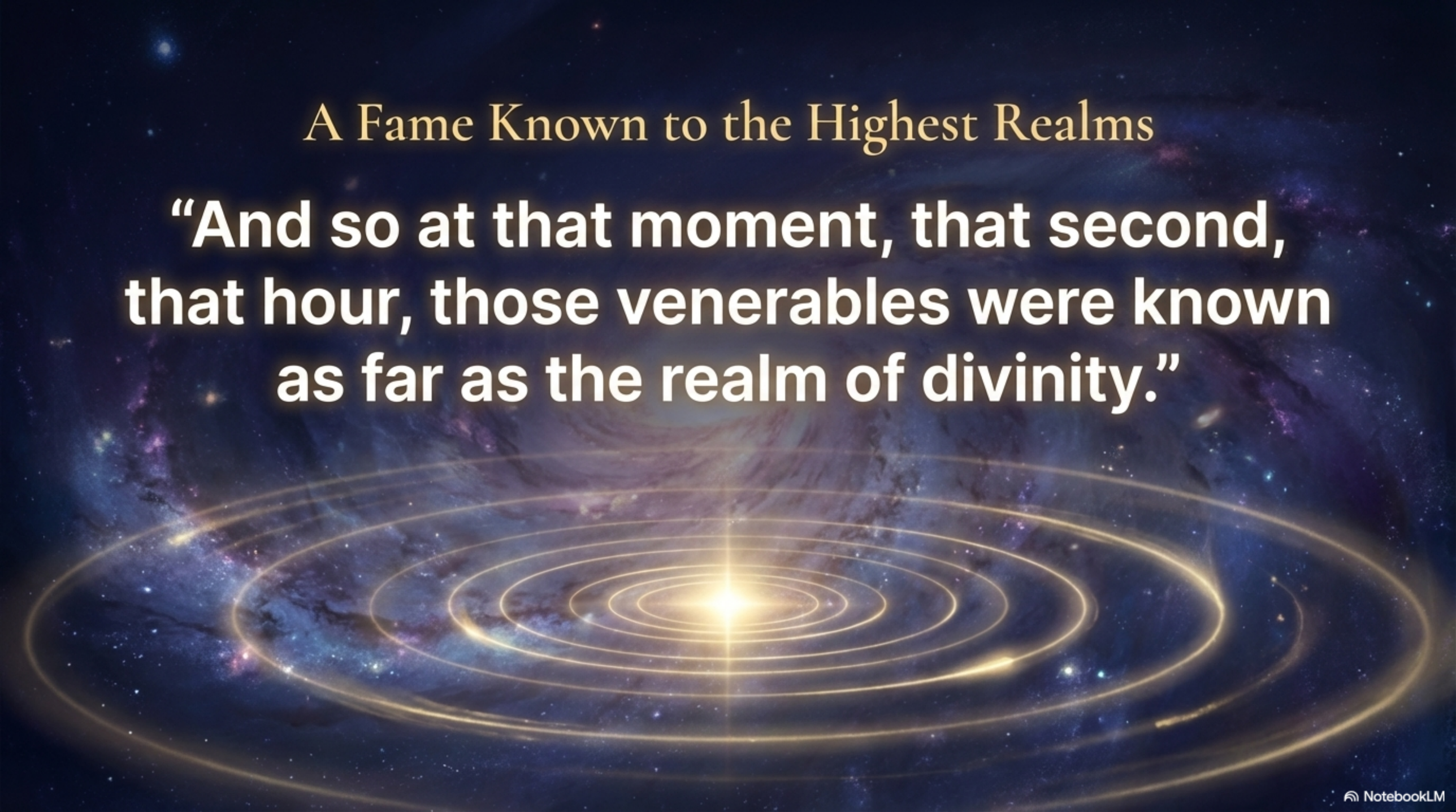
A Fame Known to the Highest Realms

“And so at that moment, that second, that hour, those venerables were known as far as the realm of divinity.”



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The Benefit for the Entire World

The Buddha's Teaching: "If the... [group] ...were to recollect those venerables with confident heart, that would be for that... [group's] ...lasting welfare and happiness."

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A Practice for the Welfare of All Beings

"See, Dīgha, how those three gentlemen are practicing for the welfare and happiness of the people, out of sympathy for the world, for the welfare, and happiness of gods and humans!"

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